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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 001467

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/27/2018

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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: YAR'ADUA COMMITTED TO BAKASSI WITHDRAWAL

REF: A. ABUJA 1337
[1](#)B. LAGOS 243
[1](#)C. YAOUNDE 762

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter Pflaumer for reasons 1.4. (b & d).

[1](#)1. (U) With the August 14 transfer of the Bakassi peninsula to Cameroon under the Greentree Agreement fast approaching, the GON has stepped up public statements expressing its commitment to go ahead with the handover. On July 25, President Yar'Adua stated at the credentialling of the new Cameroonian High Commissioner to Nigeria, "We must ensure that the August 14 handover goes ahead, in accordance with the Greentree Agreement, and then we shall continue to work together to further strengthen our existing very cordial and brotherly relations." In a July 28 meeting with Cameroonian Minister of External Affairs Henri Eyebe Ayissi in Abuja, Yar'Adua reiterated, "I am pleased that Nigeria and Cameroon are committed to the Greentree Agreement and see it as a watershed to deeper economic, social, military relations." Nigerian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ojo Maduekwe told reporters President Yar'Adua had directed all agencies to cooperate with their Cameroonian counterparts to ensure the handover is a "model of how African states can work together."

[1](#)2. (U) The Nigerian press, however, claimed that 18 to 24 people were killed on July 24 in a shooting incident between Cameroonian gendarmes and suspected militants. The gendarmes reportedly retaliated on July 26, killing 21 suspected militants. As of July 25, the press reported that more than 3,500 internally displaced people were located in the Ikang resettlement camp, and that local people feared that violence will escalate in the area, especially around the towns of Amoto and Abana. A group calling itself the "Combined Niger Delta Militants" claimed that it planned to declare a "Republic of Bakassi" immediately after the handover.

[1](#)3. (C) On July 28, in a continuation of unhelpful statements by local politicians, the Cross River State Caucus of the National Assembly urged the GON to consider "the grave security implications ... of the handover." Observers note, however, that the Senate began its Summer recess on July 9, and that the House of Representatives plans to follow on July [1](#)31. Neither House of the National Assembly plans to be in

session during the Bakassi handover.

14. (C) Comment. We should welcome Yar'Adua's public statement reiterating the GON's commitment to the Greentree Agreement. This commitment has been criticized by Senators, who insist that, under the Nigerian constitution, they have the right to review and ratify treaties. For our part, we have told our contacts that we view the Greentree agreement as, not a treaty, but an executive agreement laying out the modalities of the transfer of authority over Bakassi from the GON to the GRC (as the agreement itself says). While we expect more unhelpful calls from Cross River politicians for Nigeria to back away from its commitments under Greentree, we see no/no indication that the GON has any intention to do so. As for the legislators, with the National Assembly on Summer recess until September 9, we do not expect more than posturing from them until after the handover is complete.

15. (C) Comment continued: We share Embassy Yaounde's concern (see ref C) for the security situation both around and after August 14, and agree on the need for the USG to encourage dialogue and cooperation between the GON and GOC. That said, however, we note that, in accordance with the Greentree agreement, Nigeria withdrew its own armed forces from the peninsula two years ago, leaving only small contingents of police there since. There is no way the Nigerian police will be able to change the situation on the ground in Bakassi prior to the handover. For its part, the Nigerian military is, in any case, very heavily committed to fulfilling both its international peacekeeping role and in attempting to establish security in the Niger Delta, some 100

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km to the west of Bakassi. End Comment.
SANDERS